CLAIMS

We claim:

1. A method for collecting data about a local computer, comprising:

initiating an instrumentation session by executing on the local computer an application programmed to measure a parameter concerning the local computer;

obtaining an identifier for association with the instrumentation session on the local computer;

measuring the parameter during the instrumentation session to obtain a value;

creating a data point identifying the parameter and the value; and

storing the data point on the local computer to create a set of data points associated with the instrumentation session and with the identifier.

2. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

ending the instrumentation session; and

storing the set of data points and the identifier in a session file on a local storage device accessible by the local computer.

3. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of obtaining an identifier further comprises obtaining a globally unique identifier corresponding to a specific user.

4. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of obtaining an identifier further comprises obtaining a globally unique identifier corresponding to the local computer.

5. The method of claim 2, further comprising directing the local computer to transmit the session file to a remote computer via a network.

6. The method of claim 5, further comprising determining whether the step of directing the local computer to transmit the session file resulted in transmitting the session file to the remote computer and, if so, deleting the session file from the local storage device.

7. A computer-readable medium having computer-executable instructions for performing the method recited in claim 1.

8. A computer system having a processor, a memory, and an operating environment, the computer system operable to execute the method recited in claim 1.

9. A method for collecting data about a local computer, comprising:

initiating a current instrumentation session by executing on the local computer an application programmed to measure a parameter concerning the local computer;

obtaining an identifier for association with the current instrumentation session on the local computer;

measuring the parameter during the current instrumentation session to obtain a value;

creating a data point identifying the parameter and the value;

storing the data point on the local computer to create a set of data points associated with the current instrumentation session and with the identifier;

ending the current instrumentation session;

storing the set of data points and the identifier in a current session file on a local storage device accessible by the local computer;

directing the local computer to transmit the current session file to a remote computer via a network; and

determining whether the step of directing the local computer to transmit the current session file resulted in transmitting the current session file to the remote computer and, if so, deleting the current session file from the local storage device.

10. The method of claim 9, wherein the step of obtaining an identifier further comprises obtaining a globally unique identifier corresponding to a specific user.

11. The method of claim 9, wherein the step of obtaining an identifier further comprises obtaining a globally unique identifier corresponding to the local computer.

12. The method of claim 9, further comprising:

determining whether a session file created during a previous instrumentation session exists on the local storage device and, if so, directing the local computer to transmit the previous session file to the remote computer via the network; and

determining whether the step of directing the local computer to transmit the previous session file resulted in transmitting the previous session file to the remote computer and, if so, deleting the previous session file from the local storage device.

13. A computer-readable medium having computer-executable instructions for performing the method recited in claim 9.

14. A computer system having a processor, a memory, and an operating environment, the computer system operable to execute the method recited in claim 9.

15. A method for collecting data about a local computer, comprising:

initiating a current instrumentation session by executing on the local computer an application programmed to measure a parameter concerning the local computer and to access an on-line service;

presenting a screen to a user enabling the user to gain access to the on-line service;

obtaining an identifier for association with the current instrumentation session on the local computer;

measuring the parameter during the current instrumentation session to obtain a value;

creating a data point identifying the parameter and the value;

storing the data point on the local computer to create a set of data points associated with the current instrumentation session and with the identifier;

ending the current instrumentation session;

storing the set of data points and the identifier in a current session file on a local storage device accessible by the local computer;

directing the local computer to transmit the current session file to a remote computer via a network; and

determining whether the step of directing the local computer to transmit the current session file resulted in transmitting the current session file to the remote computer and, if so, deleting the current session file from the local storage device.

16. The method of claim 15, further comprising:

determining whether a session file created during a previous instrumentation session exists on the local storage device and, if so, directing the local computer to transmit the previous session file to the remote computer via the network; and

determining whether the step of directing the local computer to transmit the previous session file resulted in transmitting the previous session file to the remote computer and, if so, deleting the previous session file from the local storage device.

17. The method of claim 15, wherein the step of obtaining an identifier further comprises obtaining a globally unique identifier corresponding to a specific user.

18. The method of claim 15, wherein the step of obtaining an identifier further comprises obtaining a globally unique identifier corresponding to the local computer.

19. A computer-readable medium having computer-executable instructions for performing the method recited in claim 15.

20. A computer system having a processor, a memory, and an operating environment, the computer system operable to execute the method recited in claim 15.

21. In a networked computer environment having an upload server and a processing server, a method for analyzing data collected about local computers, comprising:

receiving on the upload server session files from the local computers, each of the session files containing an identifier and a set of data points associated with an instrumentation session;

transmitting the content of the session files to the processing server;

storing the content of the session files in a fielded file;

providing loading configuration criteria;

loading the fielded file into a raw data table in accordance with the loading configuration criteria;

providing summarization configuration criteria;

analyzing the raw data table to produce a summary of the information in the raw data table in accordance with the summarization configuration criteria; and

storing the summary in a working fact table.

22. The method of claim 21, wherein the step of providing loading configuration criteria further comprises providing loading configuration criteria in the Extensible Markup Language (XML) format.

23. The method of claim 21, wherein the step of providing summarization configuration criteria further comprises providing summarization configuration criteria in the Extensible Markup Language (XML) format.

24. A computer-readable medium having computer-executable instructions for performing the method recited in claim 21.

25. A computer system having a processor, a memory, and an operating environment, the computer system operable to execute the method recited in claim 21.

26. In a networked computer environment having an upload server, a processing server and a data warehouse server, a method for analyzing data collected about local computers, comprising:

receiving on the upload server session files from the local computers, each of the session files containing an identifier and a set of data points associated with an instrumentation session;

providing retention configuration criteria;

determining whether each of the session files satisfies the retention configuration criteria and, if so, storing the content of the session files satisfying the retention configuration criteria in a transfer file;

providing transfer file configuration criteria;

transmitting the transfer file via the network from the upload server to the processing server in accordance with the transfer file configuration criteria;

providing parsing configuration criteria;

parsing the transfer file on the processing server in accordance with the parsing configuration criteria to extract selected data;

storing the selected data in a fielded file;

providing loading configuration criteria;

loading the fielded file into a raw data table in accordance with the loading configuration criteria;

providing summarization configuration criteria;

analyzing the raw data table to produce a summary of the information in the raw data table in accordance with the summarization configuration criteria;

storing the summary in a working fact table; and

transmitting the working fact table to the data warehouse server for inclusion in a main fact table for use in an on-line analytical processing environment.

27. The method of claim 26, wherein the step of providing retention configuration criteria includes providing the retention configuration criteria in the Extensible Markup Language (XML) format.

28. The method of claim 26, wherein the step of providing transfer file configuration criteria includes providing the transfer file configuration criteria in the Extensible Markup Language (XML) format.

29. The method of claim 26, wherein the step of providing parsing configuration criteria further comprises providing the parsing configuration criteria in the Extensible Markup Language (XML) format.

30. The method of claim 26, wherein the step of providing loading configuration criteria further comprises providing the loading configuration criteria in the Extensible Markup Language (XML) format.

31. The method of claim 26, wherein the step of providing summarization configuration criteria further comprises providing the summarization configuration criteria in the Extensible Markup Language (XML) format.

32. A computer-readable medium having computer-executable instructions for performing the method recited in claim 26.

33. A computer system having a processor, a memory, and an operating environment, the computer system operable to execute the method recited in claim 26.

34. In a networked computer environment having an upload server, a staging server, a processing server and a data warehouse server, a method for analyzing data collected about local computers, comprising:

receiving on the upload server session files from the local computers, each of the session files containing an identifier and a set of data points associated with an instrumentation session;

providing retention configuration criteria;

determining whether each of the session files satisfies the retention configuration criteria and, if so, storing the content of the session files satisfying the retention configuration criteria in a transfer file located in a transfer queue;

providing transfer file configuration criteria;

directing the staging server to transmit the content of the transfer queue via the network to the processing server in accordance with the transfer file configuration criteria;

providing parsing configuration criteria;

parsing the transfer file on the processing server in accordance with the parsing configuration criteria to extract selected data;

storing the selected data in a fielded file located in a loader queue;

providing loading configuration criteria;

loading the fielded file into a raw data table in accordance with the loading configuration criteria;

storing the raw data table in a raw data table queue;

providing summarization configuration criteria;

analyzing the raw data table in the raw data table queue to produce a summary of the information in the raw data table in accordance with the summarization configuration criteria;

storing the summary in a working fact table; and

transmitting the working fact table to the data warehouse server for inclusion in a main fact table for use in an on-line analytical processing environment.

35. The method of claim 34, wherein the step of providing retention configuration criteria further comprises providing the retention configuration criteria in the Extensible Markup Language (XML) format.

36. The method of claim 34, wherein the step of providing transfer file configuration criteria further comprises providing the transfer file configuration criteria in the Extensible Markup Language (XML) format.

37. The method of claim 34, wherein the step of providing parsing configuration criteria further comprises providing the parsing configuration criteria in the Extensible Markup Language (XML) format.

38. The method of claim 34, wherein the step of providing loading configuration criteria further comprises providing the loading configuration criteria from in the Extensible Markup Language (XML) format.

39. The method of claim 34, wherein the step of providing summarization configuration criteria further comprises providing the summarization configuration criteria in the Extensible Markup Language (XML) format.

40. A computer-readable medium having computer-executable instructions for performing the method recited in claim 34.

41. A computer system having a processor, a memory, and an operating environment, the computer system operable to execute the method recited in claim 34.